



Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update December 8, 2023

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JINSA's [Israel at War](#) webpage is a dedicated resource for analysis, commentary, webinars, and media coverage about the 10/7 attacks and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below.

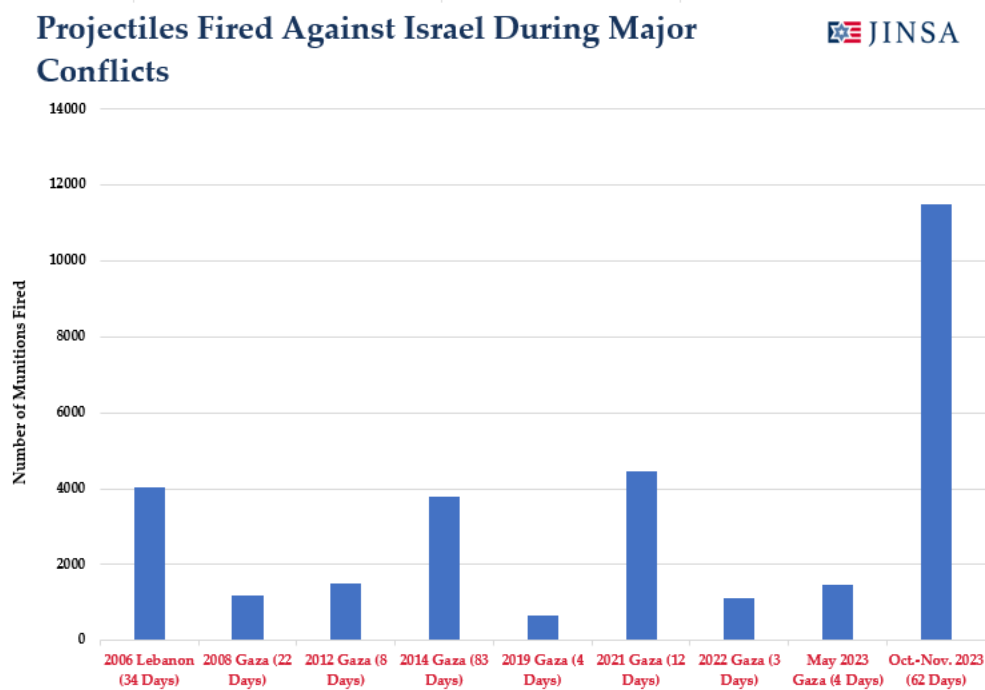
Analysis

- During a JINSA [webinar](#) on December 7, JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF Major General (ret.) Yaacov Ayish and IDF Major General (ret.) and JINSA Distinguished Fellow Yaakov Amidror spoke about Israel's war effort.
 - » MG Yaacov Ayish described four key elements of how Israeli political leadership would define success in Gaza:
 - “One is Hamas leadership. We have to eliminate [them].”;
 - “The second is that to ensure that [their terror army] doesn't have the will to fight, and that most of it is eliminated.”;
 - “The third element is their command and control and logistics capability, which we can already see, most of which is already broken. Take a look at their ability to launch.”; and
 - “The fourth element really is their ability to control what is going on with the civilians inside Gaza.”
 - » MG Yaakov Amidror, speaking about the implications of recent Houthi attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea, said, “most of the Israeli cargo will go around Africa and will not go into the Red Sea because we don't see the world doing something to stop the Houthis. It is very dangerous for the international community ... there is a declaration of a siege by a state controlling the sea, and the world is accepting it.”
 - » MG Amidror analyzed recent reports of French intelligence officials negotiating with Hezbollah to move to 18 miles north of the Lebanese-Israeli border, as Hezbollah is required to do under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, saying, “based on the experience in Gaza, [Hezbollah] might be more cautious than the past. The attempt to achieve it through diplomacy [is] worth the effort.”

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least [11,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » Rockets struck [near Sderot](#), and sirens sounded in [Tel Aviv](#), as well as other areas in central Israel and near the Gaza Strip.
- Several projectiles were fired from Lebanon in the last 24 hours.
 - » On December 8, a suspected drone infiltration [activated](#) sirens in the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona as well as Kfar Blum and Neot Mordechai in the upper Galilee.
 - » On December 7, the IDF [said](#) that several rockets were fired from Lebanon toward the northern Israeli cities of Shtula, Malkia, and Zar'it.
- Projectiles were fired from Syria in the last 24 hours.
 - » The IDF [said](#) on December 7 that two rockets fired from Syria triggered sirens in Buq'ata, a town in the Golan Heights, landing in open areas and causing no damage.



IDF Operations

- The IDF stated that it [launched](#) strikes on approximately 450 targets in Gaza in the last 24 hours.
 - » The Israeli Air Force [conducted](#) several strikes in the Khan Younis area, eliminating terrorist operatives, while the Israeli Navy struck dozens of sites used by Hamas's naval forces. The targets struck included Hamas operational posts, observation posts, and weapons depots.
 - » Troops from the IDF's Nahal Brigade [struck](#) a Hamas cell in Jabaliya after the cell [fired](#) anti-tank missiles at the troops, and troops from the Golani Brigade eliminated a Hamas cell that was preparing to launch a rocket-propelled grenade attack against the troops.

- » The IDF and Shin Bet [announced](#) they killed two senior Hamas operatives in an airstrike on a Hamas intelligence command center:
 - Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, head of Hamas’s field intelligence in Gaza and one of the planners of the October 7 attacks; and
 - Ahmed Ayush, senior operative in the intelligence array of Hamas’s al-Qarara battalion.
- The IDF stated that it launched strikes on targets in Lebanon in the last 24 hours.
 - » On December 7, the IDF [struck](#) Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon, including a command center, in response to earlier rocket fire.
 - » The IDF [said](#) on December 7 that it fired artillery shells toward the source of earlier rocket attacks targeting northern Israel.
- On December 7, Syria’s *Sham* radio station [reported](#) that Israel launched airstrikes in Syria against targets near Damascus and in the area of Quneitra, near the Syrian-Israeli border, in the last 24 hours.
- The IDF [conducted](#) operations in Tubas in the West Bank, in which an unspecified number of terrorist suspects were arrested. Five terrorists were killed in a firefight with IDF forces in the raid.
- On December 7, while [speaking](#) to IDF troops near the border with Lebanon, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, “if Hezbollah decides to open an all-out war, then with its own hands it will turn Beirut and southern Lebanon, which are not far from here, into Gaza and Khan Younis.”
- On December 7, in response to a reporter’s question about [photos](#) circulating of the IDF detaining dozens of Palestinian men in the Jabaliya area and other areas of Gaza, IDF spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari [said](#), “Jabaliya and Shejaiya are ‘centers of gravity’... for terrorists, and we are fighting them. They are hiding underground and come out and we fight them. Whoever is left in those areas, they come out from tunnel shafts, and some from buildings, and we investigate who is linked to Hamas, and who isn’t. We arrest them all and interrogate them.”
- On December 7, the IDF [announced](#) that Gal Meir Eisenkot, the son of minister without portfolio and former IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, was killed in battle in Gaza.

Humanitarian Efforts

- Israel announced on December 7 that it was [opening](#) the Kerem Crossing checkpoint along the Israeli-Gaza border to inspect aid trucks before they enter Gaza through the nearby Rafah Crossing on the Israeli-Egyptian border.
 - » According to Col. Elad Goren, an official in Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) agency, the new policy will allow Israel to help facilitate the entry of more aid trucks into Gaza than the roughly 250 daily trucks entering Gaza thus far.
- *Al Jazeera* [aired](#) an interview on December 6 with an elderly Gaza woman who criticized Hamas for stealing aid intended for civilians. The woman stated, “all aid goes down (into Hamas tunnels). The aid does not reach the nation, all the people,” and after being challenged by the journalist, she maintained, “all of it goes into their houses. They take it and will even shoot me or do whatever they want, Hamas.”

Casualties and Hostages

- Approximately 1,245 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and another 6,900 have been injured in the war.
 - » 418 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - [90](#) IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - The IDF [announced](#) the deaths of four soldiers [killed](#) in combat in Gaza, including Master Sgt. (res.) Gal Meir Eisenkot, 25, from Herzliya; Sgt. Maj. (res.) Jonathan Deitch, 34, from Harish; Maj. (res.) Eyal Meir Berkowitz, 28, from Jerusalem; and Maj. (res.) Kobi Dvash, 41, from Tiberias.
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 31 [American](#) nationals, 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, at least 17,177 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 46,000 have been [injured](#) during the war.
 - » On December 4, the Associated Press and AFP [reported](#), citing an IDF official, that roughly 15,000 Palestinians have died since the war began and that roughly 5,000 of those killed were terrorists.
 - » On October 25, President Biden [cautioned](#) against trusting Gaza Health Ministry casualty figures, stating: “I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed ... I have no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using.”
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, 266 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 3,365 have been [wounded](#) in the West Bank.
- The IDF [claims](#) that it has killed at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza since the start of the war.
- So far, [105](#) hostages in Gaza have been released, [one](#) has been rescued by the IDF, and [seven](#) [have](#) been [found](#) dead.
 - » 81 Israeli hostages have been released.
 - » 46 hostages with foreign nationalities—some also holding Israeli citizenship—have been released.
 - Thus far, 23 [Thai](#) nationals, 6 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 5 [German](#) nationals, 3 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Russian](#) nationals, 1 [Dutch](#) national, 1 [Filipino](#) national, 1 [Mexican](#) national, 1 [Uruguayan](#) national, and 1 [American](#) national have been released.
 - Hamas has released [36 children](#) and still holds two as hostages.
- Terrorists in Gaza currently [hold](#) 138 hostages, including 114 men, 20 women, and two children. 10 hostages are 75 and older, 127 are Israeli, and 11 are foreign nationals, including eight from Thailand.

- » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 9 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.
- Freed hostages Sharon Cuniom, 34; Emma Cunio, 3; and Yuli Cunio, 3, were all [released](#) from an Israeli hospital on December 7, where they had been receiving medical care since their November 27 release.
- The IDF [announced](#) on December 7 that Mohammed Alatrash, 40, of Sawa, was confirmed to be among the hostages held by Hamas. Alatrash has been missing since the October 7 attack.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- In a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on October 7, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi [said](#), “what is happening in Palestine and Gaza is, of course, genocide and a crime against humanity.”
 - » He added, “it’s not just a regional issue, it’s an issue for the entire humankind ... it’s necessary to find a quick solution.”
- On December 8, several rockets were [fired](#) toward the Green Zone in Baghdad, where the U.S. embassy to Iraq is located, likely by Iran-backed militias in Iraq.

U.S. and International Response

- On December 7, U.S. President Joe Biden spoke by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and expressed deep concern for the remaining hostages in Gaza, according to a White House [readout](#).
 - » Biden stressed that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) must be allowed to visit the hostages, and Hamas’s refusal to release women held hostage led to the resumption of fighting between Israel and Hamas. The two leaders agreed to continue to work diligently to free every hostage.
 - » Biden also reiterated the importance of continued humanitarian aid to Gaza, and he praised Israel’s recent decision to allow fuel entry into the Strip to meet “requisite needs” while arguing that much more assistance is required. The president also urged Israel to implement humanitarian corridors to allow civilians to escape fighting.
 - » In addition, the president reiterated concern about extremist violence committed by Israelis against Palestinians in the West Bank and stressed the importance of increasing stability in the territory.
- On December 7, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#) on *CNN* that while Israel is taking “important steps” to protect civilians in southern Gaza, such as designating safe areas, Israel cannot repeat “what happened in the north, in the south, in terms of harm being done to civilians.”
- In a December 7 press conference, Secretary Blinken [said](#) that Israel took “some important additional steps” to protect civilians following the resumption of its operations in Gaza. However, he added, “There does remain a gap between exactly what I said when I was there — the intent to protect civilians — and the actual results that we’re seeing on the ground.”
- The Department of Defense [announced](#) on December 7 that the United States has resumed drone flights over Gaza in support of Israel’s hostage recovery efforts.

- » Pentagon spokesperson Lisa Lawrence said in a statement, “In support of hostage recovery efforts, the US has resumed unarmed UAV flights over Gaza, and we continue to provide advice and assistance to support our Israeli partner as they work on their hostage recovery efforts.”
- On December 7, the U.S. Treasury Department [said](#) that the department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) targeted 13 individuals and entities with sanctions for transferring tens of millions of dollars’ worth of foreign currency to the Houthis, generated from selling and shipping Iranian commodities. The Treasury Department said that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) backs the sales.
 - » Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson said, “the Houthis continue to receive funding and support from Iran, and the result is unsurprising: unprovoked attacks on civilian infrastructure and commercial shipping, disrupting maritime security and threatening international commercial trade.”
 - » Nelson also said that “Treasury will continue to disrupt the financial facilitation and procurement networks that enable these destabilizing activities.”
- On December 7, *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that the United States asked Israel not to respond to missile and drone attacks from the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.
 - » According to the report, the United States told Israel to let the American military respond to the Houthis, fearing an Israeli response could expand the conflict.
- On December 7, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield twice [declined](#) to offer a position on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’s decision to invoke Article 99 of the UN charter.
 - » Thomas-Greenfield said, “We’re aware of the Secretary-General’s letter. And as has been the case from the start of this conflict, we have remained closely engaged with the United Nations and other partners in the region.”
 - » On December 6, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [invoked](#) Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, which states the secretary-general “may bring to attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security,” to call for UN Security Council action on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.
 - » The UN Security Council is expected to meet to discuss the matter on December 8 at 10:00 a.m. ET at the [request](#) of Russia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
 - The UAE drafted an earlier resolution that cited Guterres’ invocation of Article 99, called for “an immediate humanitarian ceasefire,” and urged all fighting parties to comply with international law.

Rising Antisemitism, Protests, and Attacks

- On December 7, [shots were fired](#) at Temple Israel in Albany, New York, on the first night of Hanukkah. The suspect yelled “Free Palestine” as he opened fire.
 - » Two dozen preschoolers and synagogue staff were on the premises, but no one was injured. A 28-year-old man was taken into custody.
- On December 7, footage posted by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) [showed](#) the founder and executive director of the Council on American–Islamic Relations (CAIR) saying he was “happy” to see Gazans “break the siege” on October 7.
 - » In a speech, he said, “the people of Gaza only decided to break the siege — the walls of the concentration camp — on October 7. And yes, I was happy to see people breaking

the siege and throwing down the shackles of their own land, and walk free into their land, which they were not allowed to walk in. And yes, the people of Gaza have the right to self-defense, have the right to defend themselves, and yes, Israel, as an occupying power, does not have that right to self-defense.”

- » In response, the White House [said](#) it had ended its work with CAIR on crafting a national antisemitism strategy. White House deputy press secretary Andrew Bates said, “we condemn these shocking, antisemitic statements in the strongest terms.”
- On December 7, Israeli police [blocked](#) a march in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City organized by the “Sons of Mount Moriah” and other organizations who planned to call for “Jewish control” over the Temple Mount.
 - » The march, which the police had previously approved, was [stopped](#) because protestors violated the terms of their agreement with the police not to have inflammatory signs and chants.
- On December 7, a small plane [flew](#) over Harvard University’s campus with a banner that said, “Harvard Hates Jews” and a Palestinian flag.
 - » A student group organized to counter the recent wave of antisemitism on campus, Harvard with Hamas, [claimed](#) responsibility.
- On December 7, two billboards in Jacksonville, Florida, were [defaced](#) with anti-Israel graffiti. The first said, “[Expletive] Israel,” and the other said, “Zionists are terrorists,” with a Palestinian flag.
- On December 6, employees at a cafe in Oakland, California, were filmed [denying](#) a Jewish customer use of the restaurant’s bathroom.
 - » The customer had told the staff about anti-Israel graffiti in the bathroom and attempted to go back into the bathroom to film the messages but was barred by the employees, who told her, “we’ve given you all of your food ... I know Israel loves taking private property and saying it’s their own, but we got ahead. We have a right to refuse service.” Another employee told her, “history didn’t start in 1948, lady,” and a third said, “free Palestine. Now please go.”

Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Jonathan Ruhe, Yoni Tobin, and Jordan Bridwell, [Iran on Nuclear Precipice as Oversight Dwindles](#), December 7, 2023
- Webinar: [Gaza War Update](#), with IDF Major General (ret.) and JINSA Distinguished Fellow Yaakov Amidror and JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF Major General (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, December 7, 2023
- Ari Cicurel and Zac Schildcrout, [Failure to Deter Houthi Attacks Endangers Global Shipping](#), December 6, 2023
- Yoni Tobin, [Hamas War Crimes Harm Palestinians and Israelis Alike](#), December 6, 2023
- Jonathan Harounoff, [“The Pandemic of Academic Antisemitism,”](#) *JNS*, December 6, 2023
- Webinar: [Reflections From Law Enforcement Trip to Israel](#), with JINSA Homeland Security Program Director Steven Pomerantz, Executive Director and CEO of the National Sheriffs’ Association Jonathan Thompson, and President of the National Sheriff’s Association Sheriff Greg Champagne of St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, December 5, 2023

- Yoni Tobin, [The United States Must Re-Designate the Houthis as Terrorists](#), December 5, 2023
- Ari Cicurel, [First Preemptive U.S. Strike Since 10/7](#), December 4, 2023
- Zac Schildcrout, [10/7 Attack Highlights Need to Sanction Iran-Backed Terrorists](#), December 1, 2023
- Webinar: [Gaza War Update](#), with JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal and two JINSA Distinguished Fellows, IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin and IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, November 30, 2023
- Webinar: [Flying Blind? Electronic Warfare's Impact on Civilian Planes](#), with JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal, Former Deputy Commander of U.S. Central Command Lt Gen Thomas Bergeson, USAF (ret.) and Former Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, U.S. Air Force Lt Gen Joseph Guastella, USAF (ret.), November 29, 2023
- Webinar: [Britain's Reaction to Israel-Hamas War](#), with JINSA President and CEO Michael Makovsky, Editorial Board Member and Opinion Columnist at The Wall Street Journal Joseph Sternberg, and former president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews Jonathan Arkush, November 27, 2023
- Michael Makovsky, "[What Israel Needs](#)," *The National Interest*, November 24, 2023